

# The Library Assistant:

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## A FEW THOUGHTS ON STAFF-RELATIONS.

By W. C. BERWICK SAYERS, *Sub-Librarian, Croydon Public Libraries.*

Needless to say, the above title does not signify those persons attached to the assistant in the capacity of

His sisters and his cousins,  
Whom he reckons by the dozens,  
And his aunts,

but I have in mind the relation an assistant bears to those with whom he has to work. This journal, if it is to be of any use at all to the younger profession, should be intensely practical, and although I may seem in the few following lines to be neglecting essentials, I believe when they are considered they will be found not entirely lacking in practical point.

The question of technical training will not detain us here. That such is the first postulate of success goes without dispute, and that lack of it means failure is now a truism. But is there not a social training in our profession, almost entirely overlooked, though everywhere necessary? It is always the hackneyed common-place that we fail to see, though; and therefore I presume to point out a little of it.

To commence in the order of natural evolution, we will take the embryo librarian, the junior assistant. Much depends on the first few months a lad spends in a library. There is no profession that offers so few encouragements to perseverance and effort as ours. Therefore it is essential that he should receive stimulation from the remainder of the staff. From the first day he should be taught to realise that he is part of the library system as a whole; that work of the humblest kind in the shape of dusting, tagging or carrying books, is really as dignified and as indispensable as cataloguing and classifying books. From the first day the high aims of librarianship should be placed before him and hints of the possibility of extension work some day. He should be encouraged, too, to discover new methods towards improving his work. If it is only a new way of turning off the gas, it is worth remembering, especially if it saves a moment or two in the

doing. I am an advocate of juniors keeping notebooks or diaries and sedulously recording their ideas and opinions on all things. Of course, the chief librarian might encourage these things in a lad; but in a large library one must remember that neither the chief nor the sub-librarian comes into most direct contact with the junior. These encouragements, then, should come from the intermediate assistants under whose direct control the junior comes; and I have an idea that such assistants can do much to bring out or to stifle the natural abilities. There are, of course, senior assistants who express an intelligent and sympathetic interest in the aspiration of juniors; who realise that younger brains than their own may be fertile in ideas, which, though crude and unpractical, may still contain the germ of a valuable improvement. This, again, is hackneyed, but it will bear repeating, that petty jealousy and fear of eclipse have often caused a senior to throw cold water on the enthusiasm of a younger member of the staff. A misplaced sarcasm, or an habitual want of interest does infinite damage. Some of us can remember the library where juniors were constantly coming and going and never continued in one stay. What was the reason—long hours, late evenings, small salary? I wonder, and then we probably remember a change in the upper staff, when a senior or a sub-librarian left; and after, no change occurred in the junior staff for two or three years. I am not referring to any particular library, but how many assistants are there whose memories do not supply like instances? There are lads who overcome all obstacles by that enviable quality, cheek; but the lad of this character is precisely not the lad our profession attracts. The prospective librarian as I know him is more often a lad of nervous, sensitive temperament, easily assisted, readily discouraged, and such, I venture to think, when hardened into business methods, makes the best assistant. The junior's drudgery is the senior's opportunity; when the latter can awaken and keep alive that enthusiasm without which we soon join the ranks of the irremediably mediocre. And to the junior I would say, Deserve this interest. A senior is usually over you because he excels you in some quality or qualities. Try to discover what these are, and pursue them with diligence and without bitterness or envy. You will have your reward. First, because imitation is the sincerest flattery, and even senior assistants are not absolutely proof against it; second, you will become a more useful assistant, and as such, will not go long without recognition.

The senior assistant, I imagine, is the backbone of the younger profession. For one sub-librarian there are usually three seniors. He leavens the whole staff in a wonderful way.

And his position, if properly filled, is a difficult one. Although it is not always so, he is usually promoted from staff, and has been on an equal footing with the juniors. At once it will be seen he requires tact. Swollen-headedness, or the sense of importance as shown in overbearing treatment of those in the rank he has left, will breed envy, malice and all uncharitableness among them. Human nature is so constituted that we dislike anyone who has been our equal to excel us. I do not forget the necessity of discipline, but a senior's first requisite is to make the staff like him; then no difficulty will be experienced in this respect. A junior will not readily displease one whose good opinion he values. I have in mind a staff of which the senior and junior members spend half-holidays together in cricket, rowing or geologising and botanising, in splendid harmony, yet who return to work next day without any trace of the chaos of indiscipline or the undue familiarity that stiff-necked unbelievers would predict. It is because of adaptability on the part of the seniors, with the galling assumption of superiority conspicuously absent, and of appreciation on the part of juniors. The mention of these outdoor pursuits reminds one of limitations. It will be found that apart from his profession, nearly every assistant sedulously cultivates some favourite hobby; it may be music, natural history, physical science, or even sport: thus a staff is often composed of what may be called minor specialists. If seniors would appreciatively use one another's knowledge on these points, much would be done towards unifying the staff. Nothing is more pleasing than to be consulted on a topic that one loves, and in all departments there is use for this maxim: If you don't know much about a thing you are consulted upon, and you have reason to think another member of the staff does, call that other. He will like you better for your recognition of his knowledge. While he may never ascend to the flight of the junior who answered, when asked for Pope's "Essay on Man," "We ain't got any of Pope's prose works," there are still times when an assistant might leave well alone and pay a colleague the compliment due to his superior knowledge. Another desirable quality is a well-balanced temper in dealing with fellow assistants. Things sorely trying to the patience are often said and done, but only he who has perfect control of himself can ever expect successfully to control others. A moment's outburst brings self-contempt, loss of dignity, and a corresponding loss of respect from all those who witness it. There are other and far more effective ways of reproving bad work or insubordination than shying the nearest book or pastepot at the delinquent's head. Weigh, too, everything you say, for your lightest word is heavier

with a junior than the most serious remark from one in his own rank. Neither should a senior harbour discontent or keep a grievance smouldering. A man with a grievance is a disease affecting the whole staff, and while he remains so, harmonious work is impossible. Methods are often adopted which he does not approve; but should this be an excuse for not doing his best with these methods? Or does it mean that his abilities are ignored? Surely it is possible to be loyal to a system and still hold the opinion that a better might be adopted? Having explained his view—and I take it a senior would be expected and invited to have an opinion on any method to be used—and it has been decided to work from another, he should not be sensitive and treat the decision as a slight to himself. After all it is a purely impersonal matter. Again, there is no more deplorable state of mind than that in which one imagines a superior has a personal grudge against one, that he treats one's work with more carping criticism than that of others, and is generally "down on" one. A man with a librarian's culture and breadth of view would scorn the petty personal attitude. Finally, a senior should not criticise with a junior, or allow a junior to criticise, anyone in the upper ranks. The more the latter are respected, the more respect will be vouchsafed to him.

With regard to the sub-librarian I have little to say. His qualities in relation to the staff seem to me to be adaptability, accuracy, a certain amount of initiative, a large amount of self-confidence, loyalty to his chief, and, as far as in him lies, to the existing system. He is usually a man trained in another library, and, therefore, comes with a certain amount of authority and prestige. His is a capital position in which to play the petty tyrant if he is so minded, but his opportunities for promoting good staff-relations seem to me immense. He should take an interest in the personal aims of each assistant, remembering always that they are sentient beings endowed with feeling and common sense, and are not component parts in a machine. While insisting on the due performance of duties, he should always be ready to listen to well-founded objections, weighing them and removing them whenever possible. When those unfortunate times come when he has to "row" a senior, he should never do it in the presence of a junior. This immediately gives rise to resentment and hostility, whereas a quiet private talk would bring about the needed reform at once. He should not make a confidant of any member of the staff; good fellowship does not demand this; nor should he criticise the personality or work of his chief with anyone inside the building.

These lines, written under great pressure, contain, as I said

before, nothing new. But I feel much more might be done to promote sympathy and good fellowship among assistants, and consequently better efforts. To keep alive enthusiasm, to promote thought and the forward look, these are our first necessities; for in our profession, as in all others worthy,

We live by admiration, hope and love.

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#### ARE NEWSROOMS A DESIRABLE ADJUNCT TO FREE LIBRARIES?

BY THOMAS COULSON, OF THE SOUTH SHIELDS PUBLIC LIBRARY.

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Undoubtedly when the pioneers of the newsroom first formulated their scheme for the promotion of that institution they had in view ideals which would seem to justify their action. Practical application, however, has shown that the newsroom instituted for the common good of the people, with the intention of providing useful and inspiring reading matter, has been put to many abuses. That the newsroom has its uses, and serves a purpose I do not deny, but its abuse is so overwhelming that the librarian who has the welfare of his public at heart should think very carefully before undertaking this extra burden.

It is claimed that the newsroom is the unintellectual man's library. This is a questionable statement; it might, indeed, with some show of justice, be named the lazy man's library. The average working-man's aspirations in the realm of literature seldom soar above his daily newspaper, and he prefers to have it delivered at his home and to read it there, rather than in a crowded newsroom. The supporters of the newsroom will persist in using the old phrase that the man who pays the piper should have the privilege of calling the tune. Yet they ought to recognise the fact that the majority of newsroom frequenters are never troubled by the rate-collector. It is the business men who pay most rates, and these men, are, as a rule, but casual visitors to the newsroom. Many people do not believe that the newsroom is frequented by tramps and other undesirables. A short while ago the London County Council rid the public parks of these "pests" and in consequence the newsrooms of the metropolis have become the resting place of these aimless wanderers; and, to quote a London paper, "they are not averse to using the adjoining chairs as dining tables." Now provincial newsrooms have to cope with a similar unsatisfactory condition of affairs. A reference to any library assistant will elicit the fact that these undesirable characters form the greater part of the newsroom attendance. Further, the librarian cannot exclude these unwelcome guests. They are there by right, and unless they violate some rule of the establishment they are at perfect liberty to come and go as they please. In winter the hot water pipes are always a great attraction.

While I do not infer that intoxicated men frequent the newsroom, yet they have an unpleasant knack of straying in, and making their presence felt. Tired agents, footsore and weary, often drop into the newsroom to rest, and will soon be found nodding over one or more papers, thereby depriving other readers of their use.

Our newsroom at South Shields was for a time used as headquarters of an agency, for here the collectors used to meet and square accounts with their chief. This, needless to say, was not to be tolerated.

Closely akin to the loafer is the sporting "gent," the horse-backer, the football or cricket enthusiast; whichever he be, he will prove an intolerable nuisance. I have many times seen quite a numerous gathering round a newspaper to peruse an account of a football match, and so engrossed as to exclude all others from seeing any other sheet of the paper. Is the sporting man and the bookmaker a mythical annoyance? Emphatically no! A correspondent in a Newcastle paper made a simple suggestion for economising in the newsroom. His idea was to have a large blackboard, and to chalk upon it the latest sporting news!

Many attempts have been made to rid the newsroom of this nuisance, notably the blacking-out process. This system is objectionable on the grounds that it takes some time to perform, whilst ink if wet will cause the paper to tear; the operation, moreover, is very dirty. If the paper is detained until the ink has time to dry, the librarian incurs the risk of being "hauled over the coals" for keeping his readers waiting. Again, a London librarian suggests keeping back an edition of a paper for some minutes, and by this means giving the sporting news a chance to spread and become known. But why should other readers, who make a proper use of the newsroom be kept waiting? The "Pseudonyms," at one of their meetings, were unanimous that,

"A newspaper late  
Makes readers irate."

I should not care to risk being baited by the reading public. Although the suggestion would, to some extent, ameliorate the sporting nuisance, the numbers of youths who come for football and cricket news would not decrease, whilst the loafer, like the poor, would be always with us.

But there exists still another important reason for, if not disestablishing, at least for curtailing expenses to the finest degree in this branch of library work. It is the newsroom which needs to be best lighted and heated, since the readers remain for some time and would be liable to catch colds; add to this the cost of periodical repairs, and the sundry necessities which will gather round the newsroom maintenance, and you will soon have a formidable bill to pay from an all too small income. This reason alone is enough to cause hesitation; but when all is considered: the cost of maintenance, the class of readers, and the class of reading, is it not sufficient to call for a revolution in newsrooms?

It is probably due, in some degree, to the hopeless sensationalism of their press that the Americans have been so chary of introducing the newsroom to their library establishment. The trend of English journalism is to follow our American cousins in the provision of news "faked" to suit the reader's palate. Most modern newspapers devote as little attention as possible to matters outside news, and some editors are not above inventing sensations which will increase the circulation of their papers; and we have the evidence of a London editor to show that there is a tendency to "write down" to the public rather than to aim at elevating the taste.

But even if a newspaper is giving scientific jottings, book reviews (which help the lending library readers), and useful information of a like nature, do you think the newsroom frequenter reads them? Not he! A newsroom supporter may point to these articles to show what his followers read but he is certainly in error. Much as we should like to persuade ourselves these articles are read, it is after all a pure fallacy.

Mr. Charlton Deas, in his recently published pamphlet, recommends that the space occupied by newsrooms should be utilized for lecture halls. If this suggestion were adopted we should have a source of revenue rather

than an object of unnecessary expense, besides furnishing lending and reference library readers with one of the greatest inducements to reading good literature, namely, lectures.

Public opinion is divided upon newsrooms, but the opinion that newsrooms are superfluous is becoming more and more common. The supposition that frequenters of the newsroom graduate to the lending and thence to the reference library has no grounds for support. On the contrary, experience teaches us that the newsroom frequenter keeps to his own part of the building, and is not educated by the newspaper to take his position among lending library readers.

I have often heard most strongly voiced complaints from readers that the newsroom is an altogether undesirable adjunct to the library, and the opinion that expenditure is lavished too freely upon the newsroom has come more than once from readers in the lending department.

Surely librarians as a class cannot be unduly prejudiced against the newsroom; yet the two men most likely to know the working of the place, the librarian and the janitor (if he looks after the newsroom) are almost unanimous in opinion that the ratepayer is not receiving a good return for his library rate in supporting an elaborate newsroom.

After considering these facts I think many will agree with me that until newsrooms can be cleared of loafers, until the readers can better appreciate the material provided for them, and until the cost of maintenance is greatly reduced, the newsroom is not a desirable acquisition to the public library.

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## LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

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### Correspondence Classes.

The Education Committee have arranged with Mr. James Duff Brown, Librarian of the Finsbury Public Libraries, Lecturer at the London School of Economics, to conduct correspondence classes in Section 5 (Library History and Organization), and Section 6 (Practical Library Administration) of the Examinations Syllabus.

Eleven lessons will be given in each subject, and the classes will run concurrently with those to be held at the London School of Economics, that in section 5 commencing on October 5th, 1904, and that in section 7 commencing on January 18th, 1905.

The course will consist of a selection of technical literature for reading, questions thereon, and various exercises on the principal subjects of the courses. Each paper will be corrected and commented upon by the teacher. Students will be expected to provide themselves with the following text books:—

Brown (J. D.) *Manual of Library Economy*. Scott,  
Greenwood & Co., 19 Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.  
Price 7/6 net.

Brown (J. D.) Annotated Syllabus for the systematic study of Librarianship. Library Supply Co., 181 Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C. Price 1/- net.  
 Roebuck and Thorne. Primer of Library Practice for Junior Assistants. G. P. Putnam's Sons, London. Price 1/6 net.

Reference should be possible to such books as :—

Clark. The Care of Books.  
 Edwards. Memoirs of Libraries.  
 Encyclopædia Britannica.

And as many of the works mentioned in the "Annotated Syllabus" as possible.

The course will, as a rule, be restricted to students living outside the London County Council area, but persons residing inside that area who may wish to join the classes may make application to the Education Committee. These students, however, are reminded that, as stated above, Mr. Brown will conduct oral classes in the same subjects, on the same dates, at the London School of Economics.

The fee for each course will be 10/-, payable in advance to the Hon. Sec. of the Education Committee, 44a Southwark Bridge Road, London, S.E., but students entering for both courses will only be required to pay a composition-fee of 17/6.

HENRY D. ROBERTS,

*Hon. Sec. Education Committee.*

#### THE COMMITTEE.

At a meeting of the Committee, held at the Shoreditch Central Library on August 17th, there were present Mr. Chambers (in the Chair) and Messrs. Bullen, Coltman, Coutts, Green, Hogg, McDouall, Poulter, Rees, Rivers, Roebuck, Sayers, Smith, Sureties, and Thorne.

Mr. Thorne was elected Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Rivers, Hon. Editor.

The following Sub-Committees were appointed :

*Publications :* Messrs. Thorne (Chairman), Chambers, Rees, Rivers, and Sayers.

*Education :* Messrs. Roebuck (Chairman), Hogg, Rivers, Smith, Thorne, and Sayers (Hon. Secretary).

The Committee resolved :

- (1) That eight ordinary meetings of the L.A.A. be held in a hired room (or some other place), and that all Committee meetings be held at Public Libraries.
- (2) That a suggestion from Mr. Roebuck proposing to establish a series of proficiency tests, in the subjects of the L.A. examination, be adopted.

In view of this measure the Study Circle will be discontinued.

Mr. Carter was re-elected Hon. Librarian.

All matter for next Committee meeting should reach the Hon. Secretary by Sept. 9th.

## LIBRARY JOURNALS, &amp;c.

## Bulletin du Bibliophile et du Bibliothécaire.—

In the July number M. Cottin continues his brief biography of the late M. Loredan Larchey, the famous Librarian of the Arsenal. The present portion deals chiefly with a somewhat bitter controversy which arose from a pirated English edition of his "Excentricités du langage français." We also gather that M. Larchey was, more than any other, responsible for the great popularity of memoirs in France; his edition of the *Souvenirs de Jean-Roch Coignet*, being so well received that he was encouraged to undertake the editorship of a whole series. M. Martin continues his account of the French Primitive painters; this is followed by a hitherto unpublished letter of Alfred de Vigny; and Baron Portalis contributes the first part of a catalogue of the library of Longepierre; M. HARRISSE proceeds with his admirable history of the De Thous; and M. Meunier gives another instalment of the bibliography of illustrated almanacs of the 18th and 19th centuries.

## Leyton Library Magazine for August

Includes a continuation of the Index to the Biographical History of the County of Essex, by Mr. Moon, the Librarian, and a copiously annotated list of additions to the library during the quarter.

## West Ham Public Library Hand-lists.

Number 8 is a most useful contribution to the bibliography of the Far Eastern Crisis.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of "*The Library Assistant*."

SIR,

With reference to Mr. Burgoyne's very interesting article on Richard Pynson, may I be permitted to make a few remarks? The first point I should like cleared up is the whereabouts of the *Doctrinale* of Alexander Gallus, 1492. He remarks that it is in the John Ryland's Library, Manchester, but I have very good reason to believe that it was purchased for the British Museum. Are there two copies? Then with regard to the editorial note, giving information from Mr. Thorne with reference to the copy of Statham's *Abridgment*, printed by Le Talleur for Pynson. The copy in the St. Bride Technical Library certainly has an index in practically contemporary MS. signed, *Per me R. Pynson*, and for a long time I agreed with one of the former owners of the book, Mr. Talbot Baines Reed in thinking it to be in Pynson's autograph. However, when we find that a complete copy has this index and the signature *printed*, the attribution becomes a little doubtful. I have seen three other copies of the work, two in the British Museum and one in the possession of Mr. James Tregaskis. Neither of the Museum copies has the device monogram G.L.E.T. on the last page, but both have the two leaves of printed index. The Tregaskis copy has the device but lacks the index. The St. Bride copy has the device and a MS. copy of the index. According to the latest authority, H. Burger, there are only two books printed by Le Talleur for R. Pynson, an edition of Littleton's *Tenures* and the one mentioned above.

Faithfully yours,

R. A. PEDDIE.

ST. BRIDE FOUNDATION TECHNICAL LIBRARY,

Aug. 12th. 1904.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

**Bridgwater.**—Subject to Mr. Carnegie's approval, the town council have accepted the designs for the new Public Library.

**Castleton (Rochdale).**—The Corporation have agreed to accept Mr. Carnegie's offer of £2,000 for a Public Library at Castleton.

**Chelmsford.**—The Corporation have passed a resolution in favour of the erection of a Library, Art School, and Museum at an estimate cost of £8,000.

**Gainsborough.**—Mr. Carnegie has offered £4,000 for a Public Library. The plans have been prepared and a tender of £3,600 has been accepted.

**Hampstead.**—Owing to the rapid growth of the Central Reference Library, it has been found necessary to erect a book-gallery in that department.

**Herne Hill (Lambeth).**—At the last meeting of the Borough Council, the Libraries Committee recommended that a tender of Messrs. Holliday & Greenwood for the erection of the Herne Hill Library for the sum of £11,316 should be accepted subject to Mr. Carnegie's approval of the plans.

**Librarian Killed while Cycling.**—Mr. A. Sweeney, librarian at the Oratory, South Kensington, who was making a cycling tour with a friend through North Wales, when about four miles from Towyn, on the road to Dolgelly, late on the evening of August 25th, collided with a motor driven by a Wolverhampton gentleman. The road at the spot where the accident took place is rather narrow, but the deceased's friend had passed the motor safely. It is supposed that Mr. Sweeney swerved and ran into the car. He was thrown off his cycle and fell on his head, being instantly killed.

**Littlehampton.**—At the last meeting of the Urban District Council, an elevation plan of the proposed Public Library was submitted by the Surveyor and approved by the Council, the cost being estimated at £2,000. Copies of the plan are to be sent to the donor of the site, the Duke of Norfolk, and to Mr. Carnegie.

**Loughborough.**—The Corporation have accepted the design of a local firm of architects for the proposed new Carnegie Library. The reading-room is 40 feet square, the lending library

35 by 28 feet with accommodation for 13,000 volumes, and the reference library is 23 by 18 feet. A residence for the librarian has been provided and also a store and packing room, librarian's room, staff mess-room and lavatory. The whole will be heated by low pressure hot-water radiators, and special attention has been devoted to ventilation, and the ensuring of thorough oversight of the building by the staff.

**Pittsburg.**—Smoke-rooms are being added to the Carnegie Free Library at Pittsburg, and the example is likely to be followed at other Carnegie libraries.

**Tipton (Staffordshire).**—At a meeting of the Urban District Council, two plans were submitted for a Public Library to be erected on land adjoining Victoria Park, at a cost not exceeding £3,500. The building will consist of a lending library, general reading room, reference library, committee room, and caretaker's quarters.

**Torquay.**—Information as to Public Libraries in 17 other towns (particularly as to whether the "indicator" or "open access" system had been adopted, and the advantages or disadvantages of each system) having been circulated amongst the members prior to the meeting, the subject was fully considered, Mr. Tapley-Soper, librarian at the Royal Albert Public Library, Exeter, also attending and explaining the method of each system and strongly advocating the adoption of the "open access," which is in use at Exeter. It was unanimously resolved that the "open access" system be adopted, and the architect, Mr. Davidson, requested to prepare his plans accordingly.

**Uxbridge.**—Mr. Carnegie has promised to give £2,000 for a Public Library subject to the usual conditions.

**Westminster Gazette.**—Much useful work is being quietly and steadily done by the staffs of local public libraries, quite apart from their ordinary duties. The cataloguing, for example, is in many cases so exhaustive as to be a guide not only to the books themselves but also to the contents of the books—the subject dealt with in a comprehensive work, and that would be otherwise practically buried, being brought into notice by additional entries. This is more especially the case, of course, in the reference department, where the catalogue is in manuscript, and the card system, which allows of easy extension and arrangement, is in use.

One of the latest examples of this special and useful work is referred to in the report, just issued, of the Westminster

Libraries. Some years ago the St. Martin's Library acquired a curious collection of paper-covered books containing a very large number of extracts from books and newspapers, some printed and some in manuscript, relating to Inns, Taverns, Coffee Houses, Tea Gardens, and Places of Amusement; 3,550 houses are referred to in this collection, and they have been indexed during the past year under their names, and also under the streets in which they were or are situated. The value of this collection in fixing the site of old buildings will be at once apparent.

**Wrexham.**—The question of a site for the Public Library, towards the erection of which Mr. Carnegie has offered £4,000, was under consideration at the last meeting of the Town Council, consideration of the matter being ultimately postponed until a special meeting of the Council.

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#### NEW MEMBERS.

\*Mr. A. H. DAVIS, Southampton.

Mr. W. C. REES, Battersea.

*\*Senior Member.*

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#### APPOINTMENT.

Mr. J. A. CHARLTON-DEAS, Sub-Librarian, Newcastle, to be Chief Librarian, Sunderland.